

WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman Mike Honda (D-CA) applauded today's House passage of H.R. 5940, the National Nanotechnology Initiative (NNI) Amendments Act of 2008.

This legislation, which will make important changes to the national nanotechnology research and development program, includes a number of provisions initially proposed in Honda's Nanotechnology Advancement and New Opportunities (NANO) Act, H.R. 3235.

Nanotechnology has the potential to create entirely new industries such as medicine with application in drug delivery system and more efficient solar energy technology. However, nanotechnology will radically transform the basis of competition in other fields. HR 5940 passed 407-6.

"One of thing Congress has heard from experts is that the United States is a leader in nanotechnology research, but that our foreign competitors are focusing more resources and effort on the commercialization of those research results than we are," Honda said. "I applaud Chairman Bart Gordon for his work in getting this important legislation passed."

Both H.R. 5940 and Honda's NANO Act focus America's nanotechnology research and development programs on areas of national need such as energy, health care, and the environment, and have provisions to help assist in the commercialization of nanotechnology.

In recent months, there has been much discussion about potential health and safety risks associated with nanotechnology. Honda said this uncertainty has been a major obstacle to the commercialization of nanotechnology.

"Both my bill and H.R. 5940 require a nanotechnology research plan that will ensure the development and responsible stewardship of nanotechnology."

Congressman Honda's legislation drew upon the recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Task Force on Nanotechnology (BRTFN), a panel of California nanotechnology experts with backgrounds in established industry, startup companies, consulting groups, non-profits, academia, government, medical research, and venture capital convened in 2005 by Rep. Honda and then-California State Controller Steve Westly. Its report, Thinking Big About Thinking Small, is available at http://honda.house.gov/issues/links/brtfn_report_final.pdf.

Other important issues addressed by both H.R. 5940 and H.R. 3235 include:

- The development of curriculum tools to help improve nanotechnology education;
- The establishment of educational partnerships to help prepare students to pursue postsecondary education in nanotechnology;

- Support for the development of environmentally beneficial nanotechnology; and
- The development of advanced tools for simulation and characterization to enable rapid prediction, characterization and monitoring for nanoscale manufacturing.

In addition, H.R. 5940 would require that the NNI Advisory Panel must be a stand-alone advisory committee. This concept was originally proposed by Congressman Honda in 2002 in his Nanoscience and Nanotechnology Advisory Board Act (H.R. 5669 in the 107th Congress).